Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:

determining a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;

generating a random number; and

rounding said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.

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- 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed by a third party to said transaction.
- 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number is supervised by a third party to said transaction.
 - 4. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number further comprises the step of obtaining a seller-generated increment value.
- The method of claim 1, wherein said step of generating a random number further comprises the step of obtaining a buyer-provided offset value.
 - 6. The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a vending machine.

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7. The method of claim 1, wherein a buyer commitment to the transaction is obtained by means of currency submitted to a trusted third party prior to the generation of

said random number.

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8.	The method	of	claim	5,	wherein	said	buyer-provided	offset	value	is
specified by th	ie buyer in res	pons	se to a	que	ery.					

- 9. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a serial number obtained from paper currency provided by the buyer.
- 10. The method of claim 5, wherein said buyer-provided offset value is generated from a numeric identifier obtained from a product associated with said transaction.
 - 11. The method of claim 5, wherein the seller generated random number is made without access to said buyer-provided offset value.
 - 12. A method for processing a transaction, comprising:

determining a purchase price, N.C, for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost, p, equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N;

generating a random number; and

- rounding said purchase price up to a price of N+1 units with a probability of p and down to a price of N units with a probability of (1-p).
 - 13. The method of claim 12, wherein said step of generating a random number is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.
 - 14. The method of claim 12, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.

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15.	A method for processing a transaction, comprising:				
	determining a purchase price, N.C, for said transaction, said purchase price				
including a fractional cost, p, equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N;					
	receiving an amount of X units from a buyer, where X is greater than N;				
	generating a random number; and				
	rounding said purchase price up to a price of X units with a probability of				
((N+p)/X)	and down to a price of zero units with a probability of $1 - ((N + p) / X)$.				

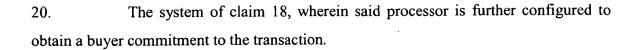
- 16. The method of claim 15, wherein said step of generating a random number 10 is performed in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.
 - 17. The method of claim 15, further comprising the step of obtaining a buyer commitment to the transaction.
- 15 18. A system for processing a transaction, comprising:

 a memory that stores computer-readable code; and
 a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured
 to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:
 determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price
 20 including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;

generate a random number; and

round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.

25 19. The system of claim 18, wherein said random number is generated in a manner that prevents a bias towards a buyer or seller.



- 21. The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost, p, equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N, and said purchase price is rounded up to a price of N+1 units with a probability of p and rounded down to a a price of N units with a probability of (1-p).
- The system of claim 18, wherein said purchase price, N.C, for said transaction includes a fractional cost, p, equal to C/100, that exceeds a whole-unit amount, N and wherein an amount of X units is received from a buyer, where X is greater than N, and wherein said purchase price is rounded up to a price of X units with a probability of ((N + p) / X) and rounded down to a a price of zero units with a probability of 1 ((N + p) / X).

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- 23. An article of manufacture for processing a transaction, comprising:
- a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:
- a step to determine a purchase price for said transaction, said purchase price including a fractional cost that exceeds a whole-unit amount;
 - a step to generate a random number; and
- a step to round said purchase price up or down to a whole-unit amount based on said random number.

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